

SAND DUNES

TO

SURF PINE

By  
Alice Gustafson

## **Forward**

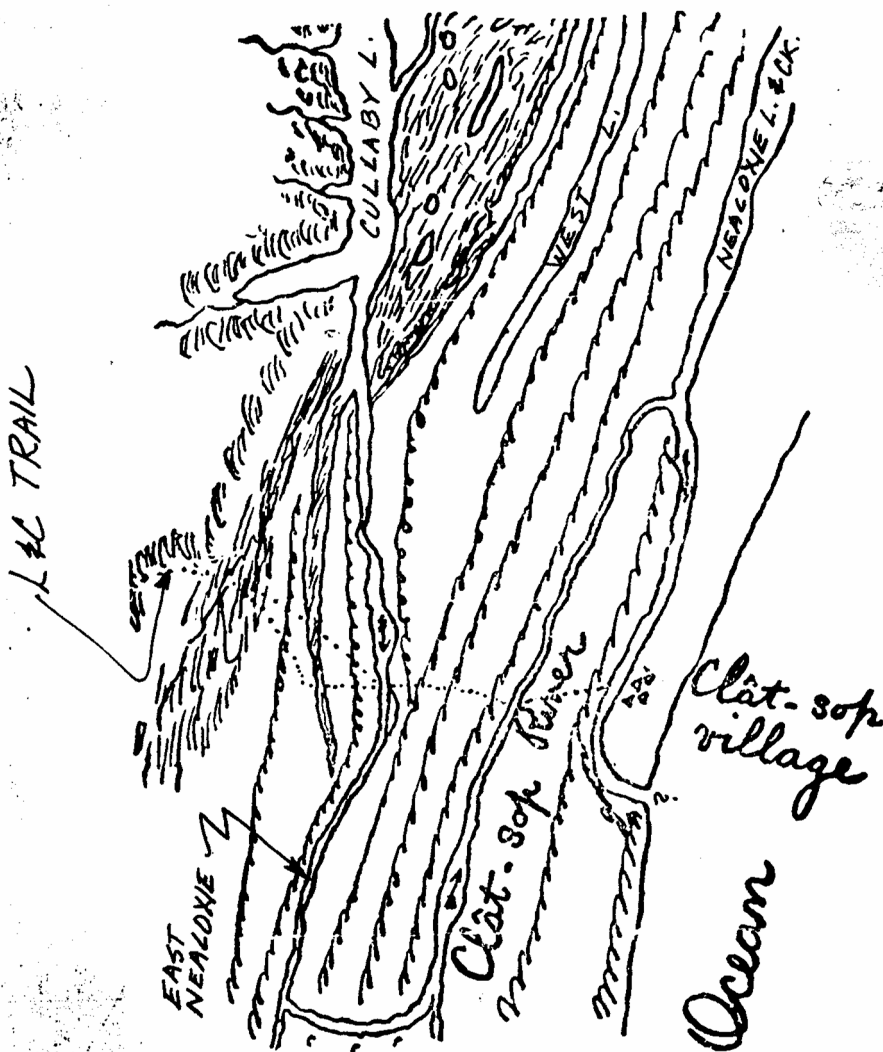
Walking along one of the many paths that lead to the shoreline in Surf Pines, there is anticipation with every footstep of the view awaiting you. It is always somewhat disconcerting that daily the scene changes. A log has floated back to sea that only the day before you could sit on, or a favorite stick you retrieved earlier to mark your path (or thrown to the dog) has been given up to the tide that flows in and out twice daily.

Along with the perpetual changing rhythm of the sea, there is the displacing of the sand on the dunes as the water completes its rigid schedule. Winds, currents, and the eternal tides mark the time at once continuous and sporadic.

It is this pattern of change that creates the dichotomy of continuity and spontaneity in the creation of the sand dunes at Surf Pines.

What began as wonderment turned into a walk back in history in search of how the community known as Surf Pines came to be.

# PREFACE



From Clark's Journals. 1805  
 ( Future location of Surf Pines, lower left.)

## EARLY HISTORY OF CLATSOP PLAINS

The Clatsop Plains, described as being the land north of Tillamook Head and extending to the Columbia River, were narrow, long stretches of shifting sand dunes, combined with the marshy water backup of several lakes, including Smith, Neocoxie, and Sunset Lakes. One mile from the shoreline is the narrow corridor where Surf Pines, one of the first land claims on the Oregon Coast, was settled.

An appropriate description of the Columbia River bar is described by the botanist David Douglas in 1825 while on the ship *Williamson*: He claimed the bar was “1,000 times worse than going around Cape Horn.” Four years later that same ship was broken up on Clatsop Spit, on the south side of the river, and everyone drowned.

In 1841 the Wilkes Expedition had a vessel named *Peacock* that went aground on the North Spit of the river and all survived that wreck. The spit was then named Peacock after the sunken sloop. The Columbia River bar was by then given the reputation “graveyard of the Pacific” by the men of the California Gold Rush when seamen described its erratic navigation.

The Plains were first settled in about 1840 by Christian missionaries traveling from the Willamette and Columbia Rivers to create trails and settlements. Quoting from Charles Stevens is an 1854 description of Clatsop Plains:

*“The country is perhaps the most curious that you ever saw. Just take your map and find Point Adams, at the mouth of this river and run down the coast twenty or thirty miles and you will pass along the western lines of all their claims, here is a high sand ridge and handsome beach where you can drive a horse and buggy, or a dozen of them together the whole length. About half a mile back of the ridge is another and about one fourth that distance from this is a third ridge which runs the whole length*

*of the Plains, just as straight as the lines on this paper. These ridges are narrow on the top, hardly wide enough for two wagons to pass, and from ten to 30 feet high. Inside this third ridge are the most of their (Pioneer) farms."*

The shoreline does not look anything like it did in those days because of what is called a prograding coast; that is, it is always building and advancing with large amounts of sand. There was no Clatsop Spit as we recognize it now. The Clatsop Spit of today was partly developed because of the construction in the 1920's of the South Jetty on the Columbia River. Over the years, the Spit has continued its presence at the base of the South Jetty and remained a serious hazard to navigation, especially for amateur boaters.

Getting to the Clatsop Plains was by way of the Columbia River from the north and a trail from the south coast. A lot of the land was marshy and difficult to travel and often swamped in the winter. The ridges that had accumulated were old fore dunes that made up the trail or road.

Shallow wells were available and the forest provided plenty of trees for wood. In part, because of light vegetation or low shrubs, Donation Land Claims (DLC) were quickly acquired and settled. Animal grazing became the primary source of income for the early pioneers. What wheat was grown had to be taken by canoe to Oregon City, 140 miles away, where it was ground for flour. About 20 land donation claims were staked by 1843, when the Oregon provisional government was established. The settlers soon found there were not enough nutrients in the soil, and some moved southward to the Tillamook area or along the Lewis and Clark River to the east.

One of the earliest settlers to remain was William Hobson. He sent to Scotland for seeds from the Scotch broom plant with the intent to beautify his property here. The yellow blossoms reminded him of his native

country. When his son Richard came back from their homeland with more seeds he brought enough to cover much of the county. In 1888 the seeds from those plants were harvested and sent to Fort Stevens for planting to hold the sand. In the 1930's its blooms extended from Astoria to Seaside where some of it was cut to make way for the widened highway.



The first DLC claim was to Jonathan and Harriett Jewett whose stake was 320 acres purchased with \$5.00 gold pieces that she kept hidden in her belt during the period she was held captive at the time of the Whitman Massacre. They held their land until 1869 when it was sold to their sons, who then deeded it to Josiah West in 1872.

The Josiah West farm was one of 146 in the region by 1880, when the population had increased to 7,200. Milk production had increased to the

point that butter was sent to San Francisco in a small ship that the farmers and merchants had built. West's cheese factory on Clatsop Plains was the largest of three and he shipped his cheese to Portland and Astoria or to the larger hotels in Clatsop County at the time. It was sold for \$.06 pound. He also sold wild mushrooms that were growing on his land. These 2,000 acres of land, originally sold for \$1.00 an acre, were divided into nine parcels, one being given to Rose West Johnson, a daughter of West. The farmhouse at the entrance to Surf Pines is part of the original West property and owned by another sister, whose son, Russ Earl still lives in the house. A major portion of the West property would later become part of Surf Pines.

Nearby, the first Presbyterian Church west of the Mississippi was established in 1846 by three families, one being the Alva Condit family, whose son became a minister there in 1877. Next to the church is the Clatsop Plains Pioneer Cemetery where most of the pioneers from the Clatsop Plains are buried. Among familiar names are Solomon Smith, the first schoolteacher in Oregon and his Indian princess wife, Celiast, daughter of Clatsop Chief Coboway. Included are families from the 1843 emigration who helped establish the Oregon Trail: John and William Hobson, Thomas Owens and George Summers. Other prominent names in early Oregon history include John Jewett, Lewis Judson, and James Taylor.

Another early landowner, Cyrus Olney, was a trustee of Willamette University in Salem and a member of the Oregon bar in 1851. While serving as associate justice of the Supreme Court, he assisted in the formation of statehood in 1859. In 1866 Olney was elected to the Oregon legislature. After he purchased 320 acres on the Plains, he moved to the coast where he eventually became the territorial judge. He died in Astoria in 1870 and is buried in Pioneer Cemetery.

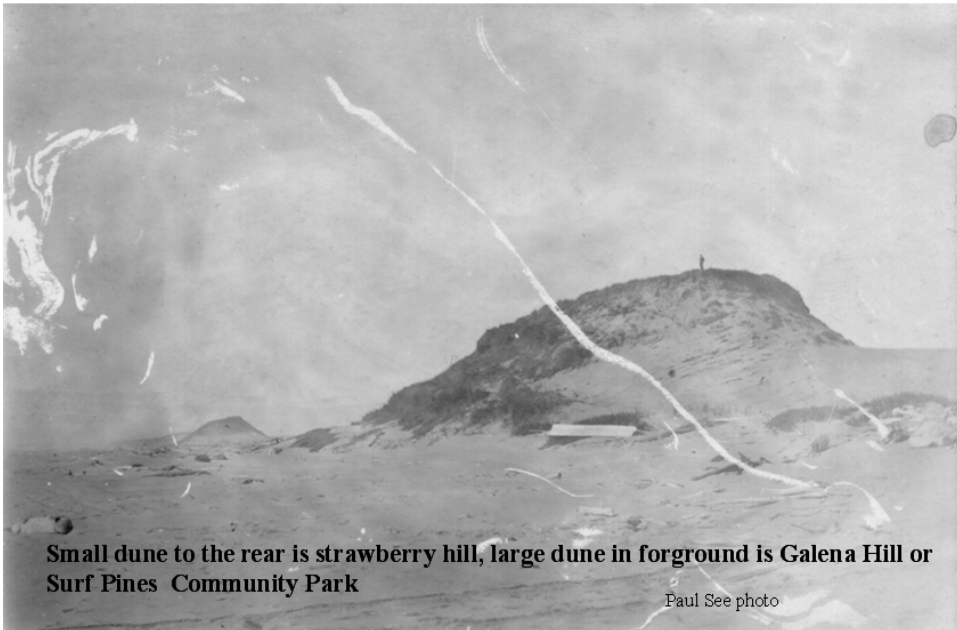
Several other noteworthy pioneers who purchased land claims were James

Taylor, the director of the Oregon Exchange Co., who adopted the emblem of the beaver on the Oregon currency; Lewis Hubbell Judson, a Justice of the Peace in Salem, whose home, "Chemeketa" was donated to the Oregon Institute for Education in that city; and John Thomas, known as the "Bard of Clatsop", a published poet who lived alone in the woods. Thomas was originally from England and owned a small parcel on the plains.

In the book "Indian Tribes of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho", the name of Clatsop is described as a word meaning dried salmon. The tribe location centered near Point Adams (near Hammond-Warrenton), and extended east as far as Tongue Point and south to Tillamook Head. The villages were: Neahkeluk (Tongue Point); Niake-wankik (s. Point Adams at the mouth of Ohaunia Creek, and Neahkstout (near Hammond). During the time of Lewis & Clark, the native population was 300. By 1855, all the Indians of the North Oregon Coast agreed to turn over their lands to the U.S. Government. They were given land and forced to move within one year to a reservation at Grand Ronde. They were to have received \$120,000 over a period of time but whether they were fully compensated is not known.

According to adjacent Surf Pines resident Paul See, whose aunt was the previously mentioned Rose Johnson, remnants of an Indian campsite were found on the east slope of what became known as Strawberry Hill, one of several so named hills around the state. Near the Bloxom, later the Maltman house on top of Strawberry Hill, the high point of Surf Pines to the north, shards of arrowheads were found. Another arrowhead was found embedded in the chest of an entire skeleton that also had a large growth on the skull. These were discovered by Paul and his Mother in the 1930's, near the base of the hill. Also at this time, Paul remembers the Hill as a popular equestrian destination but it became quickly eroded by the many trails to the top along with, at times, severe wind action.





**Small dune to the rear is strawberry hill, large dune in foreground is Galena Hill or Surf Pines Community Park**

Paul See photo

In the region of what is now Surf Pines, the early settlers primarily had cattle and horses grazing on the changing dunes, which, year after year became increasingly difficult to maintain. The natural vegetation of tall grasses would be eliminated from a severe storm or by trampling of animals foraging for food, which caused the active dunes to be further eroded. Mrs. John Waterhouse, widow of the first postmaster of Gearhart, remembered the area between Gearhart and Camp Clatsop (now Rilea) was sometimes called Indian or Devil's Race Track. Whether or not Indians raced their ponies in the hollow between the ocean and the present highway may be a myth. Old timers did speak about foxhunts around that location as remembered events.

When the ship *Peter Iredale* was wrecked trying to enter the Columbia River in 1906, much publicity was given to that catastrophe. (Remnants of the ship can still be seen in Ft. Stevens Park.) Eighteen days later, another British sailing ship, the *Galena*, a 292 foot bark from England,

sailed up the coast from Chile. The ship ran into heavy fog and rain and



**The Galena. 1906.**

Photo by Coe. Astoria, OR

drifted toward shore. It ran aground in front of what is now the beach trail from Ocean Drive and Horizon Lane in Surf Pines. Some remains are still imbedded deep into the sand near the spruce tree on the north side of the trail and other parts are now at the Columbia River Maritime Museum. In recent years the ship's bell was also donated to the Museum. Fortunately, no one was lost in this mishap. Over the years, the mythology of the *Peter Iredale* has overshadowed the similar drama of the smaller ship *Galena*.

## **REFLECTIONS FROM PAUL SEE:**

### **THE SKULL (MURDER ON THE DUNES)**

*The December 11, 1930 issue of The Seaside Signal carried a story about the discovery of an Indian skeleton on Clatsop Plains, along with descriptions of nearby "earthworks and battlements" supposedly offering "mute" evidence of a terrific struggle and of a stubborn defense." The story further identified the "Devil's Racetrack" as the location of these struggles. The story was repeated in the Reflections column of December 11, 1985, which brought back the vivid memory of a grotesque, deformed skull staring at me from our living room window sill, and which inspired me to check among older members of my family and historical records as to the validity of the "battlements" part of the yarn.*

*The "Devils Racetrack" was well known to Plains folk until recent decades. I would guess that by now only a handful of people would recognize the name or be able to point out its location. But it is an interesting topographic feature between Camp Rilea and Gearhart; a slender valley distinguished only by its narrowness and length among the dozens of north-south oriented ridges and depressions that make up the*

*Clatsop Plains dunefield. This little ravine lying just west of Highway 101 is so distinct and confined by dunes that it is easy to imagine its once having been used for a race track of some sort. And that's where the name apparently lies; in the imagination of old-timers. I have not been successful in verifying any real evidence that it was used by pre-pioneer folk for any form of racing. What would they have raced? Coyotes, maybe? Surely not horses. But it made a good story.*

*As for the battlements and earthworks, again there seems to be no reliable evidence. Just yarns that probably grew with each step like barnyard mud on new boots. Evidence of peaceful Indian habitation was once common all over the Plains, though, in the form of middens, or shell beds. Some sites were evidently used only briefly, while others reveal years of fixed settlement by their thick accumulation of shell material, bones, fire shattered rocks, and artifacts. When this ornery country kid roamed the Plains in the '30's, dozens of campsites were exposed by the migrating dunes. Most are hidden now by vegetation and new soil, but they are still there, waiting to be discovered again in the unforeseeable future.*

*I know the skeleton part of the Signal story to be essentially true, except for the location. I was very young when my mother and I encountered the skeleton on the then-bare westerly slope between Lucas and Ocean Drive*

*in what became Surf Pines, a long way from the Devil's Race Track. This poor Indian had obviously been murdered, because a little brown chert arrowhead had pierced his chest to embed in a rib near the spine. We knew the skeleton was from a local tribe by the flattened skull, both front and back. But what was most fascinating was the large bony growth behind the right ear, about the size of an orange. Mom speculated that this was evidence of a serious disability, causing the tribe to abruptly end his (or her) misery.*

*It only seemed proper to notify the coroner, but he didn't appear to be all that concerned. I guess he had fresher dead people to deal with. Weeks passed before he eventually showed up to look at the skull we had brought home for evidence; the skull that had been glaring at me for disturbing its long sleep. It was obvious that the good Doctor wasn't excited about walking two miles or more to gather some old bones. His grumbling and grouching made that clear, but my mother prevailed as usual.*

*I didn't go with them to retrieve the rest of the bones. Dad provided a gunny sack and Mom and the coroner set out across the dunes to the murder site. When they returned, the poor Indian was finally reunited with his (or her) skull and thrown like a sack of potatoes on the floor of the coroner's car before he left to certify more important deaths. We never*

*knew what happened to the skeleton after that, but I would bet anything it never received a decent reburial. More than likely it was dumped into a trash barrel, once it was out of our sight. Things were like that 65 years ago.*

*We can, however, make a reasonable guess about the time of death. In 1983, David Rankin completed a detailed geologic study of Clatsop Plains, concentrating on the development of the dune field over time. He found through carbon isotope dating of buried peat, driftwood, and charcoal that no part of the plains is more than 3500 years old, and that the dunes become progressively younger from east to west. For instance Highway 101 at West Lake is located on what was the surf line about 900 years ago. In fact, Dave's 180-year age line coincides exactly with the location of our unfortunate Indian. A little arithmetic derives the year 1805, plus or minus a few percent. So with some speculative license, one could assume it may have happened during the visit of Lewis and Clark. But why he or she was killed is of course only speculation. A primitive form of euthanasia, perhaps? The truth will obviously never be known but the murder weapon remains framed on my den wall as evidence, just in case someone demands an inquest.*

## ***LONESOME DOGNAPPERS***

*Not too long after the agonizing loss of my loving old dog, my uncle Bill West gave me two German Shepherd puppies that had been born on his Necanicum farm. They must be named Punch and Judy, he said, because he'd had a pair by the same name 'way back when he was a boy. Mom fretted over the cost of feeding two dogs, and eventually Judy was given to another family. But Punch was all mine, and he knew it. We became inseparable, like in the earlier days with Old Dog. For several years, Punch and I roamed the dunes in search of dead Indians and pirate booty and skunks and anything else we could imagine.*

*But Punch, too, disappeared one late afternoon and I was in a panic. God, please don't let this happen again! Once again I was living a heart-wrenching sense of loss as I raced through the neighborhood asking everyone if they had seen my precious dog. Finally a neighbor down the highway allowed as how he had seen a CCC bus stop, someone jump out, and then take off with my dog!*

*The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC's for short) was one of FDR's schemes to offset the terrible economic depression of the '30's. Young men from all over the country were gathered into almost military-like groups to*

*do all sorts of construction and reclamation work for the good of the country .They were provided with good meals and even enough pay to maybe send a bit back to the folks at home, wherever that was.*

*Our local group was stationed up near Fort Stevens on what is now known as the Ridge Road, and the barracks stood very close to where the new soccer field is now. Their main jobs here were to capture and stabilize the wildly migrating dunes along the Plains, and they did a magnificent if not heroic job of it. A trip through Surf Pines, for instance, still reveals the neatly arranged rows of trees they planted on what was then bare sand.*

*Most of these boys were from the South country, and obviously very homesick. It's easy to appreciate now, the motivation for snatching my dog. But at the time I wasn't in the mood for appreciating those damned thieves. I had to get my dog back!*

*During my frantic begging for someone to find a car and take me to that den of outlaws, my cousin Marion Fulkerson unexpectedly arrived in her neat Chevrolet sedan. Yes, she would take me to the encampment, if my father would go along, too. He agreed; anything to stifle that bawling kid!*



*The officer (?) in charge was more than accommodating. He took me by the hand and led Dad and me to the barracks. By this time it was late evening and most of the corpsmen were in bed or about to retire. We walked carefully down the rows of cots, inspecting each occupant and searching for extra lumps under the bedcovers. Geez! I'd never seen so many pets squirreled into one big bedroom! Not only were there a number of dogs and cats, but raccoons and even ugly critters the man said were called "possums" Boy, these guys were desperate for company! And finally a bedcover erupted and my anxious pet jumped into my arms. Punch and I (and Dad) lost no time getting back to Marion's car and the safety of our dear home. Those CCC's were a strange lot.*

*As an aside, for years the rapid spread of O'possums in the northwest was attributed to this very barracks where pets had supposedly been brought from the South. In reality, it was later revealed that O'possums had been imported as possible mink feed by a local fur farmer, but when even the mink wouldn't touch 'possum meat, the varmints were turned loose. Now there was a dumb thing to do!*

### ***OF FIRE, DUCKS AND FROGS***

*Unlike most of the other lakes on Clatsop Plains, Neacoxie Lake wasn't just a residual pond of water in the center of a big bowl of mud. The*

*southern half of that lake actually had a sand floor back in the 1930's, with water so clear you could see for twenty feet ~ more when diving beneath the surface. That sand floor remained fairly shallow from the eastern edge to about the middle, where it plunged abruptly to more than twelve feet and stayed deep all the way to the bare migrating dunes on the lake's western shore.*

*Everything about that lake was an attraction to us kids back in those days, and some of my most vivid memories are associated with it. Two events in the very early '30's are among my earliest recollections; the grass fire that consumed hundreds of acres, and the unrelated fire that destroyed the only house near that part of the lake.*

*Late at night, for no apparent reason, the grassy field west of Highway 101 suddenly burst into flame, spreading rapidly along the flat prairie east of the lake. All of the farm families, including kids, turned out with shovels and sticks to beat out the flames along their leading edge. Fortunately the wind was calm and folks were able to overcome the fire before it burned easterly to the homes along the highway, or to the Costello house nestled behind a dune at the south end of the lake. Using a branch of Scotch Broom, I had tried to help the grownups in their frantic effort, but only succeeded in melting the rubber soles of my tennis shoes. When it was*

*over, my shoes were sticking to everything and the burned rubber smelled terrible, but Mom decided it hadn't been a total loss; my old shoes had stunk worse before the fire.*

*A smaller prairie fire covered part of the same territory a year or so later that was extinguished in the same manner, thanks to a lack of breeze. But I wonder now, after 70 years, if we are too complacent about the possibility of it happening again, perhaps during a strong wind. Since that time, the bare dunes west of the lake have become a dense pine forest with many expensive homes, awaiting the next holocaust.*

*Not long after the second fire, the western night sky lit up in a shower of sparks as the Costello house burned, again without any evident cause. No one had been at home, and there being no rural firefighting service at the time, we could only gather at a safe distance and watch the flames. Costello must have had an enormous supply of ammunition in the house because when it started to explode, folks took off in all directions. The barrage seemed to last for an hour, as the flames encountered a new box of shells. Nobody was hurt, but Costello's house was never rebuilt. Some folks speculated that Costello was tied to the gangster world and booze traffic, but there was never any proof.*

*Every few hundred yards along the eastern shore of the lake, hunters had constructed duck blinds of boards and willow branches. Some were elaborate with benches and roofs, but most were simply a means of hiding from the unsuspecting ducks. And ducks there were! In the early fall, tens of thousands of ducks of every description would cover the lake, attempting to communicate with the hundreds of wooden decoys anchored to the lake bottom. One enterprising hunter from Astoria stored a truck-load of wheat and corn in a nearby shack, and paid locals to feed the ducks before the season opened.*

*At dawn on opening day, the countryside would be jarred awake by the sudden staccato roar of hundreds of shotguns, an eerie sound that lasted perhaps ten minutes until all of the ducks were either dead or had somehow managed to escape the rain of lead pellets. Then only an occasional blast as a confused duck attempted to return to its feeding grounds.*

*Shotgun shells would be piled inches deep in and around the blinds by afternoon, along with empty bottles that had recently contained aromatic refreshments to ward off the morning chill.*

*For reasons lost to time, I collected those empty shells daily until our woodshed became so full that Mom made me dig a big hole and bury them. I didn't forgive her for years. But at the end of each hunting season, the eastern shore of Neacoxie Lake would yield dozens of abandoned decoys, some fancy with realistic paint and glass eyes, some simply carved in a hurry from a block of cedar and only vaguely resembling a duck. I had a big inventory of those decoys at one time, but somebody stole them. What might that collection of decoys be worth today!*

*In retrospect, I guess the most intriguing events associated with that lake were the explosive proliferations of frogs that developed a couple of times in the '30's. Very abruptly, millions of little frogs would erupt from the lake, every one hell-bent on heading east as directly as possible. And I do mean millions! For several days the fields would be a blur of moving frogs, four or five to each square foot. Highway 101 would become so slippery from squashed frogs that cars would skid when the startled drivers hit their brakes. Every frog seemed obsessed with traveling only to the east. If you captured one of the wiggly critters and aimed him west, he would promptly turn around and resume his journey. West Lake was no impediment to their route. They would simply swim across and continue their pilgrimage to wherever. It was during one of those migrations that I tied a piece of pink yarn to a reluctant frog and tracked him for hundreds*

*of yards, safely across the highway and to the willows along the shore of West Lake.*

*While intently watching my frog, something in the willows brushed my cheek, and it wasn't a leaf or a branch. The willows were full of garter snakes, coiled around the branches as much as five or six feet above the ground. To this day, I have never seen another garter snake in a tree. And less you assume I imbibed the remains of one of those of morning-chill tonics from a Neacoxie duck blind, I swear this really happened! I had always assumed that snakes ate frogs. Could they have simply panicked when they saw this deluge of free food heading their way? It's still a puzzlement.*

*Biologists are concerned today about the rapid decline of amphibian species around the world, particularly frogs. Many species have become or are becoming extinct, and no-one is sure about the cause. So I wonder if **we** will ever again experience the great Neacoxie frog migrations of 70 years ago, or did this ornery country kid just happen to witness a last desperate attempt by nature to assure the future of a species? Sort of a last hurrah (or croak), so to speak.*

## ***GOOD TIME CHARLIE***

*Along the west shore of Neacoxie Lake in what is now the community of Surf Pines, expensive modern homes blend cheerfully into a scene of comfortable rural living. Surrounded by well-kept lawns, carefully trimmed shrubs and groves of shore pines, it is easy to assume that it has always been that way.*

*But I wonder if one family out there has ever speculated about the strange rectangular depression in their yard, like someone had been digging there in the distant past. It's still a foot or so deep, and about the size of a small garage. A garage it wasn't. No car had ever attempted to negotiate those dunes in the early 1930'. Maybe they assume it had been a trash pit from long ago, but why out here in the dunes so far from civilization?*

*A tiny cluster of houses called Sunset Beach lies farther north along that three-mile shoreline. At the southern end, though, except for one isolated house set among several old willows, there were no homes or roads or even trees west of the lake. As a matter of fact, there were darn few plants of any kind on that desolate, migrating dune field. One might easily imagine viewing an oasis in the Sahara. For the second time in recorded*

*history, sand was on the rampage, moving inexorably to the east, suffocating the grasses and choking Neacoxie Lake ever narrower.*

*It was just pure luck that Charlie's home had not yet been inundated by sand. And if the present owners of that land had ever known Charlie, they would have immediately understood that trash pits just weren't one of his priorities. Charlie wasn't antisocial or a hermit or anything like that. In fact, he seemed to have a lot of visitors. Folks would leave their cars along the highway near our farm and walk most of a mile across the grassy plains just to say "hi" to him. Other folks would row all the way down the lake from Sunset Beach to visit Charlie. He must have been a kindly soul, too, because he always gave visitors a little present in a paper bag. Mother and one of my aunts seemed to be the only folks who took him a present but never received anything in return. Charlie was fond of homemade wild crabapple jam, so they would sometimes take him several jars of the stuff. It didn't seem fair. He was so generous to everybody else. Mother told me to mind my own business.*

*Well, that isn't exactly true; one time he gave my Dad a big bottle of liniment that he kept stashed for years in the wall alongside our chimney. Mom didn't know it was there, and I never saw Dad using it on his sore shoulder. I guess it was being saved for an especially painful injury. Dad*



*would always laugh when I asked him about Charlie; said he was a "good-timer".*

*It wasn't a simple task getting to Charlie's house. After walking all that distance, you still had the lake to cross. A high and steep dune lay along the east side, and it was proper procedure to stand on the dune crest and shout across the lake to get Charlie's attention. He must have been nearsighted or something, because he always checked you out with an old spyglass before bailing out a large rowboat and paddling across the lake to get you. He was a nice enough host, I guess, although I never saw the inside of his house. We always sat on his porch to talk, provided he could clear away enough trash for sitting. Part of the porch was stacked with burlap bags full of dried corn and Charlie would always give me some to feed the wild ducks on the lake. I can still remember the wrangling about Hoover, though. Charlie was an avid Hooverite which I figured was some kind of religion, and although Mom seemed to agree with most of his shouting, I guess she just wasn't religious enough to suit him. I admired him, though. He didn't have to work so hard like my Dad. He seemed to be comfortable in all that trash; a free soul with lots of friends and not a worry in the world, except maybe another religion called Roosevelt.*

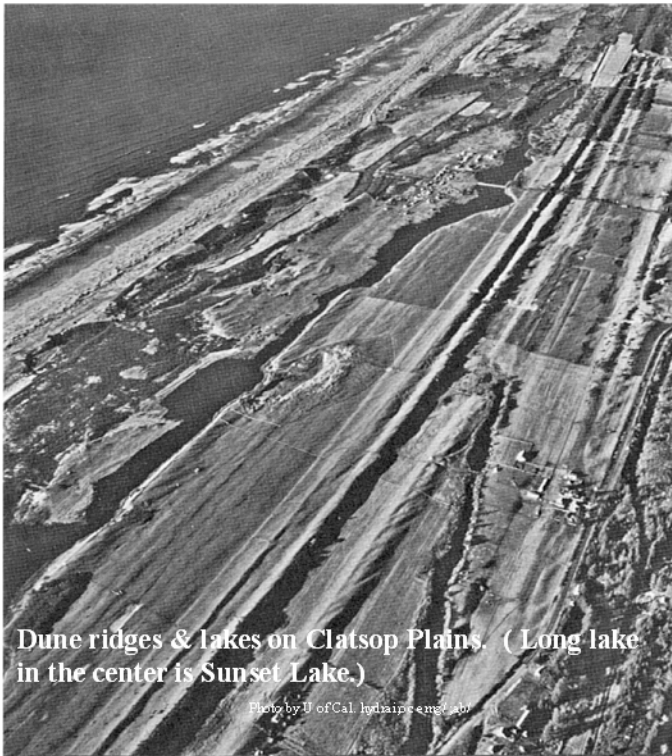
*The only other building on the property was built below ground so the roof was nearly at sand level. A trench cut into the sand led down to a narrow door, secured by a padlock. Mom assured me it was a root cellar after I got no response from Charlie about its purpose. Well, that made sense. We had a root cellar at home in which we kept dozens of sacks of potatoes and other stuff like rutabagas. But this one had a tall metal smokestack which always seemed to be belching smoke.*

*Even a six year old ornery country kid would find that strange, so I asked why. Charlie muttered something about smoking hams, and Mom promptly announced that it was time to go home. Funny, though. He didn't have any pigs, and I thought hams came from dead pigs. Nobody ever explained that mystery to my satisfaction.*

*The house and the willows and the "root cellar" are gone now, victims of time and drifting sands. Only a shallow depression remains where that mysterious outbuilding had once been. Charlie abandoned the place and vanished by 1934. From what I could make of the neighborhood gossip, I concluded that he had gotten himself involved in another religion called Repeal.*

## STABILIZATION OF THE DUNES

By the early 1900's Oregon had the largest array of unstable dunes on the west coast. In order to allow vacationing families and tourists to visit Seaside and Gearhart, one of the earliest stabilization projects was done by the O.N. & R. railroad between 1897 and 1899 at the northern end of Seaside, and it was a success.



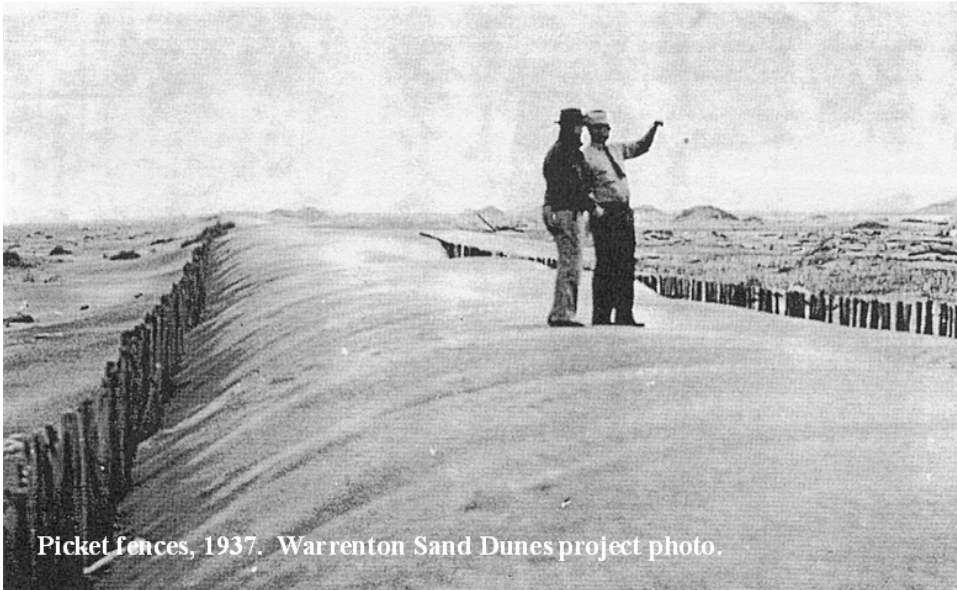
Dune ridges & lakes on Clatsop Plains. ( Long lake in the center is Sunset Lake.)

Photo by U of Cal hydrographic dept.

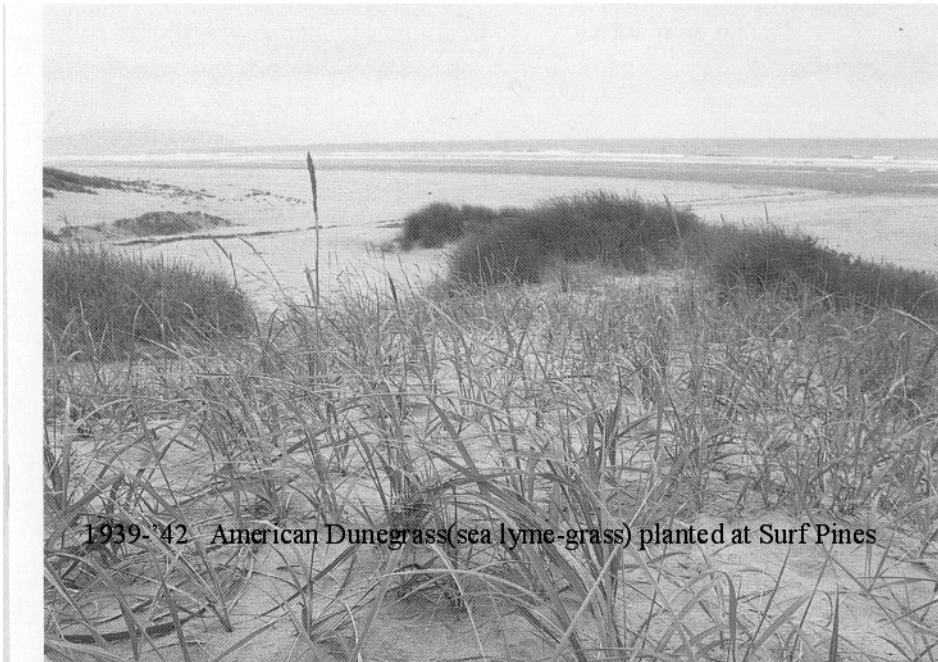
The sand problem was further altered by the building of the south jetty at the mouth of the Columbia River, which began in 1885, and later the north jetty construction on the Washington side. These were necessary for the navigation of the river as a major transportation system, but it caused the sand to fill in behind the

jetty on the south side. By the 1930's about 300 additional acres of exposed dunes had developed. To this day, sand accumulating near the mouth of the river creates a continuous danger to crossing the bar.

In 1935 Clatsop County asked for assistance from the Civilian



Conservation Corps (CCC). A camp was established at Warrenton in 1935 to stabilize the dunes with picket fences, donated by Clatsop County, using local young recruits to place them. The CCC camp would become the first and largest of its kind on the west coast. (The dunes included were those that covered Surf Pines.) When it went out of existence in 1941 as young workers fought in World War II, The Warrenton Dune Soil Conservation Project took over to finish the project. (As you drive through Surf Pines today you can still see some of the original coast pines that were planted in rows several feet apart.) Additional permanent trees such as Sitka spruce and western hemlock were also introduced. At the same time the Astoria Nursery Unit of the CCC was asked to furnish European beach and dune grass, various legumes, and Scotch broom to help with the stabilization. The only native plant material used was the American dune grass, found in the fore-dune areas, as it needs a constant sand supply. The largest natural stands are found on the Surf Pines shoreline and north to Sunset Beach. It has wider leaves and a lime green color with a common name, sea lyme-grass.



1939-'42 American Dunegrass(sea lyme-grass) planted at Surf Pines

While still in high school in Warrenton during the 1930's, Wilbur Ternyik, whose great grandfather came to the area that became Warrenton and married an Indian woman, remembered helping with the CCC project with his schoolmates. They were able to plant 2,000 trees a day and received \$7.50 for each 1,000 planted. The Corp expected only 50% growth and was amazed that they had nearly 100% success. Ternyik was later hired by Barney Lucas to plant trees and build picket fences to stabilize the dunes in Surf Pines. Because of the success of this unique project, Ternyik became a nationally known conservationist. He became a consultant around the world in controlling dunes with plant material.

Many young recruits were brought in from the Southern states to work on the project. They brought pet opossums with them. No one had ever

remembered seeing these animals in Oregon before but eventually these critters spread throughout the state.



## **BECOMING SURF PINES**

Up and down the Oregon Coast in the early 1930's and 1940's, land was being developed into resorts and adjacent golf courses, or residential communities for retirement or second homes. Many sales for these parcels

came from Oregon, but since Washington had little land to develop, Washingtonians found the North coast appealing for its proximity.

Before any development occurred on the North Coast, however, there was an early settler named Charles Hall. He built a house on Sunset Lake, east of Upper (Manion) Road, near where Surf Pines residents Mike and Mary Davies now live. Early residents recall an old cave dugout building on the property where he stored potatoes. Many thought he was a bootlegger as cars were seen coming and going at all times of the day and night.

Military secrecy will not confirm weaponry emplacements during World War II, but longtime local residents during that time recall some form of

MACHINE GUN STATION ON  
"GALENA" DUNE REMNANT,  
CLATSOP PLAINS



Constructed of driftwood and beach grass clumps, about 6' square, recessed 5+/- into sand.  
Sketched by Paul See, as recalled, December 1941 through 1942

protection placed on the highest ridges on the dunes where the Community Park at Horizon Lane and Ocean Drive merge. These placements were simply a hole in the sand with pieces of driftwood or small logs to make a roof that supported clumps of beach grass, as early residents recall from their childhood. Paul See remembers his mother and others knitting

gloves for the troops that guarded these primitive pits as they experienced a cold winter.

One of the earliest and most successful developers in the Northwest was Barnett Paul Lucas, known as Barney. He came to Portland from California in 1933 to manage the Inverness Golf Course, one of the first public courses in the city.

In 1939 Lucas purchased the Gearhart Hotel and golf course from the Frank family of Meier & Frank Co., on the Oregon coast. This facility and those he later developed at Neahkanie, south of Arch Cape, and the Palisades near the Gearhart Hotel gave him the credentials as a developer of coastal property. He later sold these properties for home development.

The land that became Surf Pines was made possible through the efforts of the U. S. Soil Conservation Service and the Warrenton Dune Conservation district in reclaiming former waste dune land. With the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) project to stabilize the dunes with their plantings, Lucas foresaw the potential for prime residential property, with more beachfront access than Seaside and Gearhart combined.

In 1944 Lucas bought a half mile of beach front north of Gearhart and with the help of the Conservation district, hired young people to continue planting Scotch broom, pine trees, and introduced daffodils on the property. That same year Lucas formed a partnership with William (Bill) Manion and named the company Seaside Gearhart Land Co. which became a general real estate company. A short time later the partnership dissolved and Manion opened his own business, named Oregon Coast Realty Co., with an office on Avenue A and Holladay in Seaside.

By 1948 Lucas had purchased more than three miles of beachfront



property. In the beginning, Lucas tapped underground water resources and built two wells, one for backup, but each having its own pump station. A total of 24 wells, called sand points, supplied excellent water to the area for many years. As property developed, Lucas built six miles of roads, with new ones coming in as property was sold. The roads were designated Upper, (Manion), Lower, (Ocean), and Middle, (Lucas).



away from the site. Within six months he resigned to spend more time on his development.

Lucas was considered by some in the community as a “wheeler dealer”, very much an authority figure who often wanted a voice on the houses being built on property he sold. Early restrictions in Surf Pines included no blockage of view for another site, height of home and fence, no trailers except for builders, no use of motorcycles, and he expected to sell to “very snazzy people to make a good community”, this last comment from an early homeowner.

At the same time Lucas was developing Surf Pines, he was appointed by then Governor Holmes to the Oregon State Liquor Control Commission as acting administrator. During the reorganization of the OLCC, Lucas spent a great deal of time

***COMMENTS FROM PATTY (LUCAS) BEALL, daughter of Barney Lucas:***

*I moved to Surf Pines in the summer of 1950. My father, Barney Lucas, had just completed the development of home sites and a golf course at Neah-kah-nie and Surf Pines was his new development. We lived in the first home built in Surf Pines (now Richard Schroeder home.) For the years I was in grade school, high school, and college, my family lived in six different homes in Surf Pines. They moved whenever a new section of home sites opened for sale.*

*For many years, my parents had a Christmas tree cutting party in the woods. Lots of Surf Pines trees filled the homes of Clatsop County friends. I was always disappointed with our tree. They usually had a windswept appearance, like a large Bonsai. My dad thought they were artistic and interesting.*

*I had a horse for a year or so that lived by the original pump house. My dad had a little barn and corral built for "Pancho". Surf Pines was a wonderful place to ride and a quick way to get to Gearhart via the beach.*

*One of my most memorable experiences living in Surf Pines was learning to drive a stick shift car when I was fourteen. Quite often Dad would hand me the car keys during their "cocktail hour" and I was free to cruise around the private roads, with the promise I must honk the horn each time I passed our house to let him know I was safe.*

*In the spring most empty lots that got some sun had very tiny, wild, sweet strawberries, especially on Strawberry Hill, and often, on the paths to the beach. My Mother and Mrs. Schroeder made yummy jam from our hours long picking efforts.*

*In the early 1950's my father was anxious to boost the population of game birds in Surf Pines. The breezeway connecting our house to the garage had an incubator contraption filled with pheasant and quail chicks that he ordered from an ad in a sport magazine. Perhaps the current flocks around Surf Pines are the progeny of these early ancestors. (That house was eventually sold to Rolf Klep, first director of the Maritime Museum in Astoria.)*

*Dad had another vision by ordering thousands of daffodils that local kids were hired to plant in the fall. I tagged along with John Holmes and John Blissett, family friends, as they helped with the planting and one day they suggested we not plant each individual bulb, but put a bunch in one large hole to lighten our task. I often wonder if they survived this mass burial.*

*One summer during my high school days, Dad came home frustrated by a homeowner. The woman had appointed herself as the Surf Pines Patrol and Security person. She drove around in a jeep complete with a gun, CB radio, and a big spotlight. She actually chased cars out! I recall many words and gestures were exchanged between Dad and the Lady Cop before she stopped her activity.*

*Growing up in a remote area like Surf Pines gave me a sense of independence and an appreciation for the safe childhood I experienced. My dad was very protective and strict but also enjoyed having fun. I recall one of his great rituals was loading the family in his car and touring around Surf Pines at dusk looking for a deer or two. They were his "Bambis" and we all knew we were living in a special place when we observed these gentle creatures.*

## ***REFLECTIONS FROM MIKE MANION, son of realtor Bill Manion::***

*In 1961, when I was about 16 years old Barney Lucas hired me at a dollar an hour to find survey stakes in Surf Pines. I wasn't interested in real estate then, but I do recollect I spent a lot of time looking in the tall grass on the dunes for these stakes.*

*After spending time away from the family, I worked with my dad (Bill Manion) on marketing the Surf Pines properties. Barney had an office at 600 Broadway in Seaside (Gimre Shoe Co. at one time) and Oregon Coast Realty (Dad's) was at 12 North Holladay in Seaside.*

*Barney had a huge plaster of Paris relief map of the entire project, laid out with lot lines, little flags, and roads. It was displayed in his office, then in ours, along with many pictures of girls in bathing suits, with glass fishing net floats, posing around the project. One of them is my wife.*

*Barney developed Surf Pines in three phases. The first began at the south entrance and went about a mile to the second road going west; the second went from the second road going west to the third road going west, and included what was called the "Golf Course Addition" as the hope was to build a golf course on the property lying west of the lots on the west side of what was Lucas Drive (Seabreeze). This is a large parcel, now owned by the Waterhouse trust, which was not developed. The third addition ran north from the third road heading West to what is known as Strawberry Hill, a sub-division in the Surf Pines area, but not originally part of Surf Pines. Surf Pines did not then exit to Sunset Beach.*

*In the middle of laying out the third portion, Barney sold all the remaining properties to my dad and some investors, which they named Surf Pines Associates. They then developed the Lake Lots, lying east of the north end of the upper road. (At one point, it was called the Governor's Association.*

*The group had no titles, no officers; so when a problem arose, Manion decided "they better have a meeting". He understood the "pulse" of the residents as unselfish and only thinking about the good of the community.)*

*When Dad purchased the remaining undeveloped land from Barney he also purchased, in fee simple, the entire road "system" and the well sites for the water system. He also purchased the original gatehouse site. One of the men who helped Dad buy the property was "Bud" Waterhouse, who owned extensive timberland in the region. After his death the Waterhouse Trust was formed for his property in Surf Pines, the one on the lower road.*

*At one time I recall the little "putt putt" golf course with nine holes around my parents' home. It was written up in Golf World and Golf Digest and was called "Kona Golf", where you used a wiffle ball on the drives and a real ball on the putts. It had real greens, tees, markers, scorecards and flags. This course also had an underground sprinkler system to keep the greens and tees in good shape year round.*

*Surf Pines was really not a place as it was an informal life style. There were no geographical boundaries to Surf Pines. Only a small area known as Surf Pines Beach on the lower road, at the south end, is actually incorporated. The rest is just land sold by somebody to somebody. Restricted and with some zoning now, it was always the idea to make it casual living. Dad was against gates, and against forcing people to join the Surf Pines Association. He gave the water and roads to people and accepted their money if they cared to pay, to help maintain those utilities. The roads and water system remained exclusively the property of my parents until Dad died, at which time they were deeded to the Association (not the Associates that had been terminated). Eventually Mother deeded the gatehouse also.*

*Over the years Dad mowed the edge of all the Surf Pines roads with a Yazoo mower. When my son got old enough to walk behind it, he then*

*earned money mowing the edges.*

*Sometimes Dad would trim the trees along the entrance road by standing in the back of a truck holding a chain saw over his head, cutting away at the limbs.*

*Deer did, and do, abound in Surf Pines. Regretfully they are not afraid of man and become easy targets for hunters, which Dad fought to keep out of Surf Pines. He actually fed the deer apples from his hand!*

*Dad tried everything for security. What worked best was him, at night, chasing joy riders out! He had State Police and County Sheriff Deputies drive through often (even though, at that time they were driving on private roads!) At Christmas and Easter he always remembered them with gifts.*

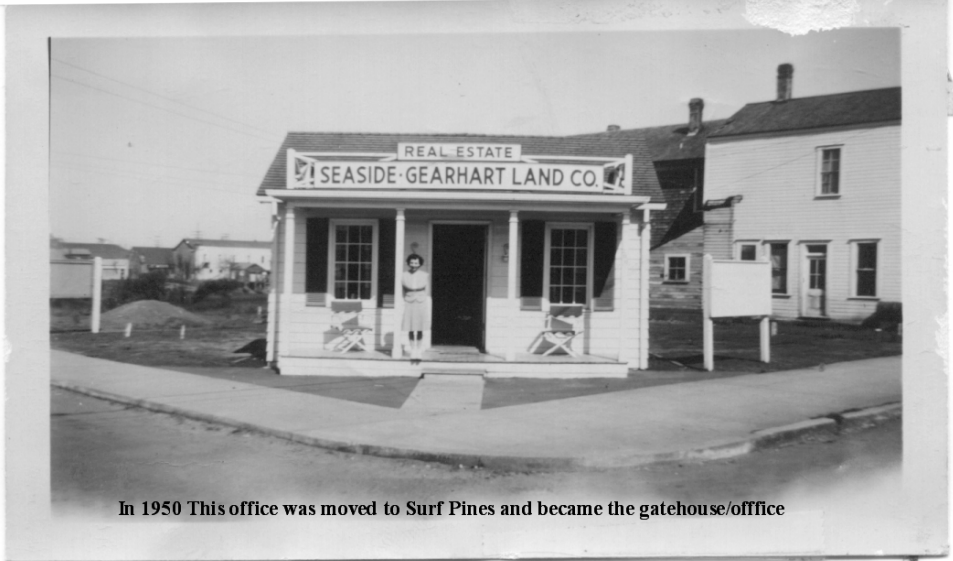
*The Surf Pines area was finally brought into the Gearhart Fire District. Dad always bought a lot of tickets to the Fireman's ball. The "Hydrants" in Surf Pines were really standpipes on small mains, but we got credit from the insurance rating bureau for them.*

*Dad was always against making the roads public, making the water system public and filling out reports. He never did fill out a public utility report for the state, even though, each year they sent him one. He said not to let the government tell you (us) what to do. His comment, "paper work just makes more paper work" reflected his philosophy that this was his property and he did not need to report to anybody.*

*In the early years of Surf Pines, Dad and some of the residents took care of the water system, the potholes in the road, trimming the trees, and keeping the little realty office (by the south gate entrance) open for sales. He also published the first telephone directory and directional maps for Surf Pines. While having a home in the desert, he often came to Surf Pines and lived in the gatehouse at the south entrance when he died in 1974.*

## THE GOOD LIFE IN SURF PINES

The private roads leading into Surf Pines in the 1950's coupled with the protection of wild life, made the area park-like in its setting. When Bill Manion moved his small realty office onto Surf Pines property, he made

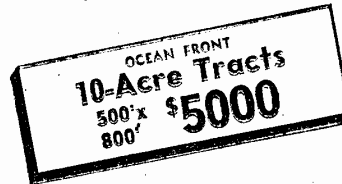
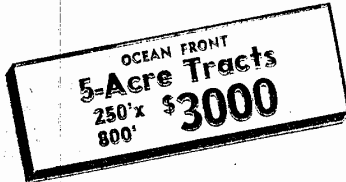


In 1950 This office was moved to Surf Pines and became the gatehouse/office

sure that no “riff-raff” came through. He set up his company to sell property but he also was able to control any traffic that he thought might harm the owners and their homes. He could be seen as the posse comitatus of the community. Not much went on that he didn't know about because he was always patrolling the roads for any new activity and striking up conversations with homeowners to make sure they kept to his and Barney Lucas' vision of a simple but elegant community of like minded people. Below is a 1950's ad from the Oregon Journal.

# GEARHART SURF PINES

2½ miles of unbroken ocean frontage located midway between the Gearhart and Astoria Golf Courses.  
The whole area in recent years has been planted with 150,000 pine trees and 350,000 Scotch Broom.



Come down to tract office on property, 1 mile no. of Gearhart on highway 101—turn west at sign to beach.

**NOTE:** *With the sale of each tract the buyer will receive the title to enough lake frontage on Sunset Lake to build a boat house or landing.*

## BARNEY LUCAS

**OWNER AND DEVELOPER**

*For Information on Both Developments*

**WRITE:** MELVIN YIKEN, McClure Bldg., Seaside, Oregon  
C. E. VAN BERGEN, Nehalem

Phone Seaside 747W.  
Phone Nehalem 4416

The first home built on the bend of Surf Pines Road and Manion (then High Road) was for Barney Lucas and his family in 1950. When completed, it had a commanding view of the ocean and the dunes below. In the valley below his home, he created a small lake about a half mile long, meant to be a resting place for migratory waterfowl. Within a few years, the home was sold to the Schroeder Family.

At about the same time, the William Hazeltine Family from Portland purchased six acres of property several hundred yards north and built a



sumptuous home. The home was designed around the extensive Pacific Northwest art the Hazeltine Family collected. Several in the family were



**Virginia Hazeltine at home in Surf Pines**  
(U or O Museum of Art, Eugene, Oregon.)

artists themselves whose work was shown in galleries in Portland. Virginia Hazeltine, Bill's wife, was on the first board of the Arts and Humanities Council from which the Oregon Arts Commission was created. Her involvement with the University of Oregon's Museum of Art in Eugene included organizing the first traveling exhibition of Contemporary Northwest Art around the state.

The Hazeltine Collection eventually was gifted to the university and included over 300 works of art, some of which were seen in the home in Surf Pines.

For many years during the 1950's and 60's, the Hazeltine Family hosted lavish parties for visitors such as author James Michener, Oregon author Stewart Holbrook, and poet Robert Frost. Family members recall that the property across the road from their home was planned to be a race track, but they were relieved when the land was developed into home sites.

Because of the views and serenity of Surf Pines, Bill Manion had no

trouble selling lots to accommodate the people from Portland wishing for a second home on the coast. Early advertising reads like a bargain hunter's paradise with five acre lots selling for \$3,000.00 and ten acre tracts for \$5,000.00 with title on the lake front to build a boat house or landing!

Taking a break from his career as an illustrator for magazines *Life*, *Fortune*, *Look*, *Newsweek*, *Collier's*, *National Geographic*, and *Woman's Home Companion*, Oregon born Rolf Klep wanted a more peaceful life in 1956. Klep had distinguished himself in World War II as a graphic artist for all the Navy's technical publications. He was given special duty assignments in France, Germany, Egypt, India, Italy, Greece and the whole Pacific theater.

Knowing the Hazeltine Family through his involvement in University of Oregon's Museum of Art, Klep and his wife, Alice, built their home nearby. Because of the importance of his art collected from around the world, especially Japan, much of his artwork was donated to that museum.

After moving to Surf Pines, Klep became a member of the first Astoria Planning Commission. It was ironic that he moved to the coast to retire only to become involved in more vigorous activity than when was working full time as illustrator. He joined the Chamber of Commerce, Pacific Art Guild, American Legion, the Elks, and Rotary Club.

While living in New York, Klep did all the historical research and rendering of the historic Fort Clatsop, which became the basis for its restoration. His illustrations helped credit the site as a National Memorial.

A dream Klep held for thirty five years came true in 1963 when he interested a group of local people to form the Columbia River Maritime

Museum which named him its first director. It is now considered one of the finest maritime museums in the country. Klep donated many of his



finest paintings and illustrations not only to the Astoria facility, but to the aforementioned Museum of Art on the campus of University of Oregon, Mariner's Museum, the Baseball Hall of Fame, National Geographic Society and the Astoria Public Library.

Other Surf Pines residents, who appreciated the solitude Surf Pines allowed, were two well known Portland interior designers of the 1960's. Lila Colwell owned an

architecturally designed home on the south end of Ocean Drive for many years. Harvey Welch, well known to Portland residents had a designer home built on the north end of Ocean Drive, where he often hosted national cookbook author James Beard. Oregon born Beard conducted

cooking classes in the summer at Gearhart and was a frequent visitor to Surf Pines.

As more home sites were developed, the ambience of Surf Pines changed. With Barney Lucas retiring and leaving the area, Bill Manion continued to sell lots through the 1960's and 70's. More and more people came not only from Portland but were arriving from other cities and states as well. Local residents from Seaside and Astoria moved into already built homes or built new ones for permanent living. Manion could no longer control the growth of the development. Surf Pines went from a dream of like minded people enjoying a serene quality of life, to a coastal community with a variety of architecture and changing lifestyles of the residents. More and more, it became a community of permanent residents who wanted a say in governing their community.

When Bill Manion died in 1974, changes were already underway with the Surf Pines Water Association and the Homeowners Association. The dream of an exclusive homogenous community no longer was a reality. In its place, Surf Pines grew up to become a variety of living accommodations, from the small cottages used for getaways to permanent large residences, reflecting the changes in lifestyles. You might not see one neighbor for a year or you may greet another going out to the paper box each morning. A stray dog may be running with his owner or you might be surprised by the local deer chomping at your rose bush.

Whether a visitor or homeowner, Surf Pines still captures a moment of solitude when observing the ocean from a distance or looking up at one of the original pine trees that still sway precariously in the wind and houses the many crows, blackbirds, robins, or starlings. Once in a while an occasional duck will descend to nearby water. In early spring, the woodpecker often gives a hammering wake up call that resounds in the neighborhood.

Surf Pines has a calming effect just saying the name or slowly driving in and out of the gates. Whether a beach house or a dream house, it is home.



1959. Patty (Lucas) Beall with friends.  
( Lucas Family photo.)

## **Acknowledgements**

This book could not have been developed without the cooperation of Patty (Lucas) Beall, her late brother, Jim Lucas, Mike Manion, and Paul See. They had first hand knowledge of the formation from sand dunes to the community of Surf Pines. I am grateful for their willingness to share with me their personal stories.

I also wish to thank Liisa Penner, curator of the Clatsop County Historical Society, for her assistance in editing the story, as well as Sonja Gustafson-Trautman for her creative ability.

Without my husband, Tom, who formatted the final process, and gave full support from its inception, I am the most grateful. He also built our beloved beach house in Surf Pines, where we have been “part timers” for over thirty five years.

Alice Gustafson  
Portland, Oregon  
2005



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